

Amendments to the Drawings:

Examiner approval of the attached amendment to Fig. 8 to add the legend

-- PRIOR ART -- is respectfully requested.

REMARKS

Claims 1-6 were examined in the Office Action mailed February 23, 2007.

The following objections and rejections are pending:

- Objection to Fig. 8, requiring labeling as “Prior Art.”
- Rejection of claim 6 under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph, for lack of antecedent basis for the term “the clamping device.”
- Rejection of claims 1-6 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as unpatentable over Japanese patent document JP 2004/050334 (“JP ‘334”), in view of U.S. Patent Publication No. US 2003/0166383 A1 (“Kimura”).

In response to the drawing objection, the Applicants have attached hereto for Examiner approval a Replacement Sheet showing the label “PRIOR ART” with Fig. 8. Examiner approval of this drawing change is respectfully requested.

With regard to the § 112 antecedent basis issue, the Applicants note that claim 6 depends from claim 5, which in turn depends from independent claim 4. At its fifth line, claim 4 recites “a clamping device.” Accordingly, because there is antecedent basis for the recitation of “the clamping device” in claim 6, withdrawal of the pending § 112 rejection is respectfully requested.

Finally, with regard to the § 103(a) rejection, the Applicants respectfully submit that the JP ‘334 reference is not effective against the present Application, and request withdrawal of the pending rejection.

The present Applicant was filed in the U.S. on March 31, 2006. This Application is a U.S. National Phase application based on International application PCT/JP04/14360, filed September 30, 2004, and claims priority to Japanese application JP 2003-343437, filed October 1, 2003. The JP ‘334 reference was published in Japan on February 19, 2004, after the October 1,

2003 priority date. The JP '334 reference therefore would not qualify under § 103(a) as prior art under § 102(a), § 102(b) or § 102(e).

Because the JP '334 reference is not effective as prior art to the present Application, the Applicants respectfully request the pending § 103(a) rejection be withdrawn.

CONCLUSION

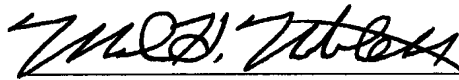
The Applicants respectfully submit that claims 1-6 are in condition for allowance. Early and favorable consideration, and issuance of a Notice of Allowance for these claims is respectfully requested.

If there are any questions regarding this amendment or the application in general, a telephone call to the undersigned would be appreciated since this should expedite the prosecution of the application for all concerned.

If necessary to effect a timely response, this paper should be considered as a petition for an Extension of Time sufficient to effect a timely response, and please charge any deficiency in fees or credit any overpayments to Deposit Account No. 05-1323 (Docket #038658.57498US).

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Respectfully submitted,



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